CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing response information from a pre-printed label in relation to bar code information on the label, comprising the steps of:

a) scanning bar code information and response information from a pre-printed label with a bar code reading means operatively connected with a processing means,

wherein the label comprises an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and an information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the bar code reading means with the bar code sequence, and

b) processing the scanned information of step (a) with the processing means.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the processing means further comprises a decoding means and a data correlation means, wherein scanned data is decoded by the decoding means and decoded data is correlated with bar code information by the correlation means to generate correlated data responses.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the indicia area is visibly marked thereby indicating the presence of response information on the label.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein a response ratio of visibly marked indicia areas versus unmarked indicia areas is determined in relation to a plurality of correlated data responses.

5. The method according to claim 3, further comprising the step of storing the processed information of step(b) by a storing means.

6. The method according to claim 4, wherein the indicia area is visibly marked by hand.

7. A method for processing response information from a pre-printed label in relation to bar code information on the label at the time of a consumer's purchase at a transaction center, comprising the steps of:

a) scanning bar code information and response information from a pre-printed label with a bar code reading means operatively connected with a processing means,

wherein the label comprises

an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and

an information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon,

arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the bar code reading means with the bar code sequence,

b) processing the scanned information of step (a) with the processing means,

wherein the processing means further comprises a decoding means, a data correlation means and a computing means, wherein scanned data is decoded by the decoding means and decoded data is correlated with bar code information by the correlation means and by the computing means to generate correlated data responses, and to provide transaction information in response to the processed bar code information to the transaction center, and

c) storing the processed information of step(b) by a storing means.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the indicia area is visibly marked thereby indicating the presence of response information on the label.

9. A method for scanning a consumer response from a pre-printed label on a product at the time of purchase, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a label for a predetermined product,

wherein the label comprises a bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and an information indicia area, for a consumer to optionally mark a response therein, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by a scanning means with the bar code sequence,

b) providing an inquiry statement to a consumer directing the consumer to respond to the inquiry directly on the label, and

c) scanning the label at the time of purchase by the scanning means to concurrently obtain the consumer response indicated from the indicia area and the bar code information indicated from the bar code sequence.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the pre-printed label further comprises the inquiry statement.

11. The method according to claim 9 further comprising the step of:

d) processing the scanned information of step (c) by a processing means to determine the consumer response.

12. The method according to claim 11 further comprising the step of:

e) storing the consumer response of step (d) by a storing means.

13. A method for capturing consumer response from a pre-printed label on a consumer-selected product at the time of purchase, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a label on the consumer-selected product,

wherein the label comprises a bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and an information indicia area, for a consumer to optionally mark a response therein, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by a scanning means with the bar code sequence, and

b) capturing the consumer response by

i) scanning the label at the time of purchase by the scanning means

ii) decoding the scanned information of step (ci),

iii) processing the decoded information of step (cii), and

iv) storing the processed consumer response by a storage means.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the label further comprises an inquiry statement.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the inquiry statement directs the consumer to respond to the inquiry by visibly marking the information indicia area directly.

16. An information label, capable of being scanned by a scanning means, comprising an encoded bar code sequence area for providing encoded bar code information and at least one information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label.

17. The label according to claim 16 wherein the information indicia area is arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the scanning means with the bar code sequence.

18. The label according to claim 16 further comprising an inquiry statement area.

19. The label according to claim 16 further comprising a pre-printed encoded bar code sequence.

20. The label according to claim 16 further comprising a printed information indicia area.

21. The label according to claim 18 wherein the inquiry statement area directs the consumer to respond to the inquiry by visibly marking the information indicia area directly.

22. The label according to claim 18 further comprising a printed inquiry in an inquiry statement area.

23. The label according to claim 18 affixed to an item.

24. Packaging for a product having information label, capable of being scanned by a scanning means, comprising an encoded bar code sequence area for providing encoded bar code information and at least one information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label, wherein the information indicia area is arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the scanning means with the bar code sequence.

25. The packaging according to claim 24, wherein the label further comprises a pre-printed inquiry statement area which directs the consumer to respond to the inquiry by visibly marking the information indicia area directly.

26. An inventory tracking method for determining future orders for a predetermined item having a pre-printed information label, based on one or more consumer responses received at the time of purchase on one or more labels of said predetermined item, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a label on the product,

wherein the label comprises a bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, an information indicia area, for a consumer to optionally mark a response therein, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence such that the label is readable by a scanning means, and an inquiry statement soliciting the consumer to affirmatively respond to future purchases of the product,

b) scanning the label at the time of purchase by the scanning means to obtain the consumer response indicated in the indicia area,

c) decoding the consumer response to be either marked or unmarked,

d) processing the consumer response in relation to planned orders for the product,

e) storing order information in relation to processed consumer responses, and

f) generating an order for the predetermined item based upon stored consumer responses over a predetermined period of time.

27. A machine-readable medium, having encoded thereon program code, wherein, when the program code is executed by a machine upon a predetermined event, the machine implements the steps of:

a) scanning bar code information and response information from a pre-printed label with a scanning means operatively connected with a processing means and a computing means,

wherein the label comprises an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and at least one information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon, wherein each indicia area is arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence and each other indicia area on the label to be concurrently readable by the scanning means with the bar code sequence, such that the scanning means reads a bar code sequence of a predetermined format and also reads a consumer response from an information indicia area positioned at a predetermined location in relation to the bar code sequence,

b) processing the scanned information of step (a) with the processing means, and

c) storing the consumer response information processed in step (b), by the computing means.

28. The medium according to claim 27, wherein the scanning means is configurable to scan a bar code sequence and at least one information indicia areas in one or more differing arrangements.

29. A label reading system for concurrently reading information from a pre-printed label, comprising:

a) a scanning means for scanning bar code information and response information from a pre-printed label with the scanning means operatively connected with a processing means and a computing means, wherein the label comprises an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and an information indicia area, for optionally placing response information thereon, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the bar code reading means with the bar code sequence, and

b) a program code for configuring the scanning means to concurrently read a bar code sequence of a predetermined format and a consumer response from an information indicia area positioned at a predetermined location in relation to the bar code sequence.

30. The system according to claim 29, further comprising the steps of:

c) a decoding means for decoding the scanned information of step (a), and

d) a response means for providing purchase information in response to a decoded bar code sequence to a display.

31. A method for processing a plurality of consumer responses about a labeled item from a pre-printed label, comprising the steps of:

a) scanning bar code information and a plurality of consumer responses from a pre-printed label with a scanning means operatively connected with a computing means,

wherein the label comprises

an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and

two or more information indicia areas, for optionally placing response information thereon,

wherein each indicia area is arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence and each other indicia area on the label to be concurrently readable by the scanning means with the bar code sequence, and

b) processing the scanned information of step (a) with the computing means.

32. A method of doing business in a retail store environment wherein a consumer's response is digitally captured by a scanning means reading the consumer's response on a predetermined product's bar code label, which has been marked by a consumer in an indicia area on the label, at the time of purchase at a transaction center, and the consumer's response is correlated with related information regarding the predetermined product over a predetermined period of time, comprising the steps of:

a) printing a label for a predetermined product in a retail environment, wherein the label comprises an encoded bar code sequence having encoded bar code information, and an information indicia area, for a consumer to place the consumer response thereon by marking, arranged in proximity to the bar code sequence on the label to be concurrently readable by the bar code reading means with the bar code sequence,

b) positioning the label at a predetermined location on the product,

c) scanning the label of the predetermined product at the transaction center, thereby scanning bar code information and consumer response information from the label using a bar code reading means operatively connected with a processing means, a decoding means and a computing means,

d) decoding the bar code information and the consumer response information with the decoding means,

e) processing the decoded bar code information and the decoded consumer response information with the processing means,

f) providing product transaction information in relation to the processed decoded bar code information to the transaction center with the computing means whereby product information about the predetermined product is presented to the consumer, and

g) correlating consumer response information in relation to the decoded consumer response information with the related information regarding the predetermined product over a predetermined period of time.

33. The method according to claim 32, further comprising the step of:

h) generating a report for the predetermined product based upon the correlated information of step (g).